TALK BY FRANK CHALK AT THE DALLAIRE PRESS CONFERENCE,
8 SEPT. 06

Dean Graham, Associate Dean Carr, Senator Dallaire, distinguished guests, students, friends and supporters of the Montreal Institute for Genocide and Human Rights Studies at Concordia University, and working journalists,

A few months ago, on a sunny April morning, I found an unusually elegant envelope in my mail box at the Concordia University Department of History. It bore the imprint of the Senate of Canada. Even more memorable were the contents of the letter, marked confidential. In it, Sen. Romeo Dallaire revealed that UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan would soon announce his appointment to the UN Advisory Committee on Genocide Prevention.

Could the Montreal Institute for Genocide and Human Rights Studies mobilize its expertise to help him make a serious contribution to the work of the Advisory Committee, he asked, by sharing its knowledge with him and facilitating his access to the world-wide network of genocide scholars with which MIGS is in regular contact? Then, in a classic Dallaire-ism, he let us know that didn't want to be a freeloader: he, in turn, would offer his services to MIGS and share his experience with Concordia students and faculty seeking to understand and prevent genocide.

With strong support from Prof. Graham Carr, then the chair of the History Department, and David Graham, our forward looking Dean of Arts & Science, and with the backing of colleagues on the Board of MIGS, I accepted Sen. Dallaire's offer with alacrity.

Early in June, Sen. Dallaire and Anemone Fritzen, his liaison assistant for UN work, met with Dean Graham and me at Concordia to fill in the details of our partnership. Concordia is providing Sen. Dallaire with an office for himself and his assistant and full access to its outstanding facilities for research on genocide. MIGS is furnishing Sen. Dallaire with trained graduate student research assistants, with the expertise of the diverse group of faculty members associated with its program in genocide studies, and with an introduction to the world of genocide scholars.

Sen. Dallaire, for his part, will share with the Concordia community a wealth of experience blended with his own passionate commitment to preventing genocide and crimes against humanity. At least once a year Sen.

Dallaire will deliver a major public lecture at Concordia and present a less formal discussion on a subject that interests him to a MIGS workshop on genocide and human rights. Throughout his stay with us, whenever his schedule permits, he will participate in the meetings of the MIGS workshop and participate in the broader dialogue with students and faculty researchers in the Concordia community. In the spring, he will be a keynote speaker at our international conference on the role of radio broadcasting in inciting and preventing genocide. And he will join us as a research partner in grant applications such as the application which has just led the Simons Foundation of Vancouver to award us a grant of $40,000 for our work with him.

This afternoon it is my privilege and an honor to name Sen. Romeo Dallaire as a MIGS Senior Fellow, the title he held for a time at Harvard's Carr Center for Human Rights Policy. Joining Sen. Dallaire at MIGS, will be Major Brent Beardsley, his personal staff officer in Rwanda. He is also the co-author of the best-selling memoir, Shake Hands with the Devil: The Failure of Humanity in Rwanda. I am honored to name Major Beardsley, who took African history courses with me before graduating from Concordia in the mid-70s, a MIGS Research Associate. Brent Beardsley's dedication to Concordia is matched only by the courage of his actions in Rwanda.

Faculty and students working with MIGS are looking forward to helping Sen. Dallaire fulfill his international mission. Ours is a partnership with a huge potential, not only to advance knowledge, but to help heal the world by reforming how the UN approaches the prevention of genocide. Creating, refining and disseminating knowledge is the essence of research; and the contribution of research on the prevention of genocide to improving the world makes worthwhile every penny spent on supporting universities like Concordia.

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